

CRUEL AS THE GRAVE; The Secret of Dunraven Castle.

BY ANNIE ASHMORE,
Author of "Faithful Margaret," Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

As this, the hero of the hour, appeared before friends, a soft rustling stirred the throng. Fair faces lit up with pleased surprise, and Mrs. Creedy's soft eye settled upon him with eloquent satisfaction.

Lord Inchcape shaded his joyous countenance with one hand. He too might have had a son!

The play went on, the tripping progression of the music which ushered in the fluttering fairies.

They seemed to pour out of the shining palace upon the moon-bathed lawn, and with rhythmic motions and swaying arms to weave themselves into a labyrinthine dance, in and out, and round and about again, with the captive as a center and inspiring theme. The captive pleaded most eloquently, in dumb-show for freedom, but they only whirled around the faster, and mocked him with delicate peals of elix laughter.

These sylphs were the daughters of neighboring gentry, there present, and looking on with critical complacency. For weeks past they had haunted Dorimant to rehearse their roles, under the tutelage of a certain Signora, premiere danseuse of Royal Opera, who had condescended to run down from London for the purpose of having taught them their parts with a surprise to him as it was to the spectators. As for Lordy Delamere, whom the old Duchess so generously presented to him as his future wife, he had not caught one glimpse of her yet, although she was the queen of the fairies, for whose sake he had written the vaudeville. In vain he had inquired for his old-time playmate; she was not to be seen about Dorimant after his arrival, and his unavoidable engagement prevented him from following her to the Pavilion, her mother's residence.

But Auberon knew who was coming when he heard a long-drawn violin note like an elfin horn, and all the dancing fairies sank down to their knees, looking upward at a single ray, more airy and elix than any of them, who came floating out of a giant calla cup and down to earth; it was Lordy Delamere, but Lordy after some breath of enchantment had blown over her and transformed her into a beautiful woman, with woman's mystic power.

She was a golden blonde, her flowing tresses seemed to be saturated with yellow sunshine; her eyes were purely sapphire, with fire in their depths; her countenance was a perfect oval, with cheeks so pure a rose that the brilliance of her eyes was increased tenfold, while her delicately aquiline nose gave dignity to her habitual expression of arch mockery. Her form was a ravishing picture; she was a lovely and attractive creature, created for love and happiness.

Having descended to earth, she paused a moment in an inimitable attitude, with her bright head on one side, and a sparkling roguery in her eyes, while she scrutinized the intruding earthling who had fallen into her power. The elfin host still humbly knelt in glittering semi-circle, the flowers of fairyland glowed in a rainbow cordon around them; but all the silvery light seemed to gather about the Queen, as she hovered alone before the captive.

Auberon gazed at his old-time playmate with eyes that gratefully deepened until they were almost black. Astonishment at her superb development was his first sensation, then, as his artist-eyes marked all and drank it in, a smile grew in their clear depths so wonderfully sweet and exulting, that the girl turned her head away with a moment's delicious timidity, fluttered and fascinated. Involuntarily the youth stretched out his hands to reach her, forgetting his role which sign of her power instantly rendered her self-possessed; and she eluded him with a peal of the smallest, silverest elfin laughter that mortal ear ever caught, and with a wave of her wand that sent her attendants drifting well out of the way, she spread her arms as if they were wings, and bounded into her past as dephry.

The trumpets blew a wild measure that made the heart beat faster, while she floated round and round the limits of the mead; now you caught the flash of her eyes, now her tresses spun an aureole about her head, and her white arms seemed to sustain her airy figure in space. Most intricate was the dance, the time rapid and precise, and the steps absolutely twinkling; so light those winged flights, she seemed to float on the moonbeams of fairyland, marking, with delicate precision, each refulgent pulse of the music, and each flying bound shook out a shower of silvery chime from the fringes of tiny bells that edged her tunic.

This pretty sight was watched in breathless delight by the company, but with deeper emotion by one or two among them.

Lord Inchcape gazed upon this gay sprite in all her exultant beauty and joyance, and his own sorrow and loneliness pressed heavily upon him. Where was his beautiful Oliva, young and innocent as this sweet girl? and he thought of Sient-as-Vrecon, with its swollen seas around it, and the blasts that swept them into wrath of the old tower walls, forgotten in far England, within which he had imprisoned unhappy Engeldone, with no consolation save his child to love and bear his company.

And he thought of the man who had come into his life to spoil it; who had stolen the errant fairies of his wife, who had fastened a stigma upon his public character; who had poisoned five long years of the best of his life; and again he looked round upon all this gayety and rejoicing, which mocked his desolation, and beheld his enemy.

A stranger was just gliding his slitherous way among the chairs of thirty-five, with a suggestion of foreign travel about his dress and the un-Engish fashion of his beardless face and enormous black mustache. His picturesque person and inscrutable countenance attracted many an examining glance; but he met no eye, nor looked to right or left as he wound pliantly forward; he seemed oblivious of all save the pretty danseuse on the stage.

Not until he had reached the very front did he pause; there he leaned against the corner panel by the mimic stage, folded his arms, and gave himself up to the pleasure of gazing at Lordy Delamere.

Lord Inchcape was white as death as he shrank back in the shadow of a curtain, and a gloomy fire glowed in the eyes which he fastened upon the man who had robbed him of wife and reputation.

Loveday's dance went on. From time to time she flung a timid glance at Auberon, noting every change. Two years had passed since she had seen him; he had then been her intimate and endearing companion, capable now of teasing her with all boyish pranks, and now of subduing her by his dreamy, visionary moods; but whatever he did, his goodness always remained, to rivet her innocent love. She saw him now in the glorious springtime of manhood, gifted and fascinating; and as she stole these shy glances and perceived how calm and serious though kind his look was, woman's ambition for the first time fired her soul, and she resolved that he should feel her maiden power.

Then her whole aspect changed as if she was inspired; she slackened the airy velocity of her steps to an undulating motion, she slowly outstretched her white arms, her head sank back—she raised her softening eye upward with a look of solemn fervor; she seemed to be weaving down some transcendent spirit from the heavens.

She made an impassioned picture! The effect was overwhelming. Forgetting that she was an amateur—forgetting everything save her beauty and inspiration, the spectators burst into a storm of applause; in a moment the stage was sprinkled with a drift of flowers, torn from the ladies' bouquets and the gentlemen's coats.

But Auberon's heart sank—he had ceased to smile at her, his beautiful face expressed severity and surprise; clearly, he thought her bold to display herself in that moment of supreme fascination save of those who loved her.

She suffered a moment of suffocating shame, but recovered herself sufficiently to finish the dance, but it was a flush faded from her cheek, her eyes were hidden beneath the golden lashes; more languidly she revolved to the lengthening adagio of the music, as if oppressed 'neath the weight of that austere gaze; at last she sank to earth in a final curtsy, rose softly and glided behind her fairy companions and was lost to view.

The dark stranger, who had devoured with his eyes her every motion, when she was no longer visible, drew a faint sigh and passed his hand over his face, as if awakening from a dream; and he still then did he appear to realize his surroundings, and cast a leisurely, careless glance around him.

The first eyes he met were Lord Inchcape's. The deadly frowns were face to face. Neither spoke; each scanned the other's ashen countenance keenly. Inchcape's was fierce and bitterly scornful, the lightning of his eye made the other quail, and then rage and sickness with impotent revolt at the open insult of the look.

"Go!" said the Earl—one deep-toned word, like a knell.

In the rustling, gathering music of the elfin march, to which the elves were now sweeping round the stage, the brief colloquy was lost to all ears save those of Mrs. Creedy and Mrs. Delamere, who sat nearest. Ever since the stranger's appearance they had remained motionless, pale and trembling, and holding each other by the hand.

At sight of the raging, demoniac face of Lord Inchcape's foe, Laura Delamere's hand had dropped cold and languid from Mrs. Creedy's, and she sank back with a stifled moan and closed eyes. For once the Earl had loved, there too, 'twas a first love!

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IN THE RANKS. A CAVALRYMAN'S LIFE IN THE REGULAR ARMY.

A Hard Time at First—Learning to Drill and Ride—In the Barracks—Play Mixed With Work.

THE life of a soldier in the service of Uncle Sam is but vaguely understood by civilians, says W. J. Rouse in the New York Recorder. Many people imagine that the enlisted man has nothing much to do but to loaf around in warm barracks, eat good food in plenty, draw and spend his pay and worry his mind about nothing. His position is secure and his salary is certain, therefore what better could a man want?

This is doubtless the opinion of many men when they enlist as recruits, but before the two years necessary to the making of a good soldier have elapsed he finds that soldiering is anything but a bed of roses.

After a citizen has signed the enlistment papers at the recruiting office's office in the city, has been examined and accepted and assigned to a troop in the cavalry service—assuming that he has enlisted in that arm of the service—he is sent to the post where his troop is stationed. At Fort Riley (Kansas) there are detachments of recruits now in process of training for cavalrymen, and it is of their daily life that this article will treat.

The recruit is either sent to the post from Fort Sheridan, Jefferson Barracks, David's Island or Columbus Barracks, according to the locality of his former home, and when he arrives at the post is sent to the recruit barracks. Lieutenant Lewis, of the Second Cavalry, is now in charge of recruits, and Sergeant Dolan, Troop I, Seventh Cavalry, one of the oldest men in the cavalry service, is their drill master. If the recruits arrive in citizens' clothes, uniforms and other clothing necessary to the soldier are given to them. The clothing is warm, substantial and well made.

The newcomers are put through a thorough medical examination by the surgeons, immediately upon their arrival and are all vaccinated. When they are ready to begin soldier life in earnest they are issued arms and equipments and their education fairly begins. But they do not have a day horse to ride, nor are they placed at once in the ranks of the troop to which they have been assigned, by any means. There is a probationary period averaging sixty days, during which the poor recruits wish they were safe at home again every time the sun goes down. Their instructions begin in a very tame manner. A drill master takes them out upon the broad parade ground, surrounded on three sides by the quarters of the cavalrymen, and there puts them through their paces, in full view of the old soldiers, who "guy" them unmercifully at times. After they have been taught to stand in a comparatively straight line, to